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AUTHOR Ireland, Rayma Reed
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ABSTRACT

The responsibilities and duties of administrators in special education are examined, particularly with regard to mainstreaming. Knowledge of disabilities, educational trends, and specific agencies and community services is necessary as well as an understanding of the legal requirements of P.L. 94-142 (The Education for All Handicapped Children Act) regarding physical facilities and transportation. The importance of personnel selection criteria and evaluation is stressed. Program factors involving accountability, service delivery, and evaluation are considered. Finally, the administrator's role in fostering positive attitudes and relations regarding special education is discussed in terms of other administrators, special services staff, regular classroom staff, consultant services, special and regular education students, parents, and the community. (CL)

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THE ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Rayma Reed Ireland
MA, Special Education
Drury College, Springfield, MO
Graduate Student: SMSU, Springfield, MO
Educational Specialist in Administration
Special Education Instructor, Neosho Jr.-Sr. High
Neosho, MO

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THE ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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IV. Summary

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As an administrator in special education, one finds a multitude of responsibilities and duties that must be performed for the program to be successful. Knowing what the duties are and how to handle those duties is vital. The primary role of the administrator is to ensure that necessary and appropriate services, with complete, effective provisions in the program, are ensured for all handicapped students. (Lietz & Kaiser, 1979) The administrator must see that the services for the handicapped are integrated into the whole school plan in a positive manner and not set aside as a separate entity. As the key person in the introduction of handicapped children and the services provided them into the regular school setting, the administrator will be the determining agent in the successful acceptance of the program. (Prillaman, 1983)

For the purpose of this paper, "administrator" will be defined as "the principal." However, keep in mind that many of the duties and responsibilities discussed are often delegated to others such as the vice-principal, special education supervisor, special education director, special education consultant, special education teacher, building and plant manager,

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transportation director, etc. or are retained by the assistant superintendent or superintendent. Because his role will vary among schools, a prospective administrator must be aware of each area of responsibility in order to implement or supervise the delivery of services.

When speaking of "mainstreaming", the definition which should be remembered is:

> "... the temporal, instructional, and social integration of eligible exceptional children with normal peers based on an on-going, individually determined, educational planning and programming process and requires clarification of responsibility among regular and special education administrative, instructional and supportive personnel."

Mainstreaming should include provision of a least restrictive environment (LRE); looking at the individual student's educational needs; and researching, programming, and implementing alternative learning programs. (Cochran & Westling, 1977)

The administrator may need to attend in-service workshops to become informed about special education students and programs. Through the in-service programs the administrator can become familiar with many components of special education services. These include an understanding of:

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1) physical, mental, and emotional deviations of handicapped children
2) the effect of these deviations on children, their families, and the community
3) specific agencies and community services which are available to assist the handicapped
4) current trends in educational programs for the handicapped
5) major studies and characteristics of each type of handicapping condition
6) literature available on handicapping conditions

This knowledge is necessary to the positive incorporation of special education into the regular school setting.

Physical facilities and transportation are governed by Public Law 94-142. The administrator must make sure that physical facilities are appropriate for handicapped children. The services in the facilities must be accessible as well as useable. The facilitative qualities of the structure and design of the environment must be considered. For example, transportation conveyances must meet the appropriate standards: A minimal traveling distance should be maintained, and the mode of transportation may need to be varied. The type of physical accomodation needed will be dictated by the handicapped students using the transportation. Transportation staff must be trained in handling emergency medical treatments, in the use and care of

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bracing apparatus and other equipment, and in other techniques that will aid them in dealing with handicapped children. (Hegarty, Pocklington, & Lucas, 1982)

The selection of special education instructional staff is the same as that of other staff members. However, the special education teacher must also possess the qualities of strong social feeling and genuine interest in handicapped children. After selecting his staff the administrator will supervise the special education staff members in order to evaluate their teaching ability. Further, the administrator will assist the teachers in improving their classroom instruction. The administrator will also monitor the special services staff for their abilities to work cooperatively with other employees in the district.

Provision of services through the special education program is of primary concern to the administrator. The entire administrative staff, including the superintendent, must have a real commitment to providing the most appropriate, least restrictive alternatives in learning experiences for handicapped children. (Gearheart, 1980) The administrator will be held accountable for all areas of the program including

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1) cost efficiency, 2) delivery system, 3) the degree to which program goals are attained, and 4) the degree to which the individual needs of handicapped children are met.

The administrator will plan the special education program and make budget recommendations. (Lietz & Kaiser, 1979) Although more money is received for handicapped students than for regular school students, the school will spend money from the local funds as well. The budget will include special services staff salaries, special equipment provisions, and supplies and materials to be used in the special and regular classrooms. Other monies will be provided for costs of transporation and physical facilities. Fiscal responsibility is important in providing the necessary program for handicapped children.

The coordination and administration of the program's delivery system contains several components. Initially, the administrator should take part in child-study teams for the identification, assessment, and placement of handicapped children. He will receive, maintain, and disseminate referral forms. The administrator arranges for an appropriate evaluation for those students recommended through the screening

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procedure. He must understand the diagnostic procedure which will lead to a decision on the status of handicapping conditions. Since the decision to evaluate is an administrative one, the administrator should play a supportive, if not active, role on the screening, assessment, and placement committees. (Lietz & Kaiser, 1979)

Once a placement decision is made, the administrator will serve on the local education agency (LEA) planning committee to devise an individualized education plan for the handicapped child. He will participate as a programmer to determine what services the child will receive and when the child will be staffed. Once the IEP is in effect, the administrator will monitor the implementation of the services. He will also supervise the maintenance of appropriate records for each handicapped student. Throughout the program of services the administrator will implement the due process procedures. (Lietz & Kaiser, 1979)

Sometimes the administrator will need to provide alternative programs outside the school facilites. Some special education students may need homebound instruction for an extended period of time. Other students may be confined in a hospital or sanatorium

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requiring homebound instruction services. This will create a need for special education teachers to visit with these students and provide them with instruction so that when they return to school they will not be behind. School-to-home intercommunication systems (telephone hookup between home and school) and educational television service can be used as supplemental learning programs for homebound students.

Mainstreaming should not be considered as scheduling handicapped children in regular classroom. It is, instead, a cooperative team approach involving all school personnel in the education of handicapped children. "... the alert and well-prepared administrator can facilitate team functioning through specific actions, such as providing all team members with appropriate information concerning the task." (Podemski, Price, Smith, & Marsh, 1984) The scheduling should be based on the instructional needs of the handicapped child and should incorporate flexible heterogeneous grouping. (Lieberman, 1985)

The provisions for student discipline and curriculum, as a part of the IEP process, will be monitored by the administrator. The administrator will evaluate the service delivery program for both the

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program goals and the extent to which the program has met the needs of the individual handicapped students. This monitoring should be a continuous, on-going evaluation, allowing for adjustments to be made in order to meet program goals and individual objectives. An overall policy for each of these areas may be included in the program goals.

The administrator must first assess his own attitudes toward special education and handicapped children before establishing relationships with others involved with handicapped children. Most administrators in an attitudinal study conducted by Brozovich and Kotting (1982) ranked their responsibility activities in special education:

-tenure evaluation of itinerant special education staff
-tenure evaluation of classroom special education staff
-teacher assignments
-special education graduation requirements
-monitoring for compliance with special education rules and regulations
-ordering educational supplies and equipment
-developing program goals and objectives
-student discipline

The majority (82%) responded that they were well informed of the special education rules and regulations. Time spent in special education administrative activities averaged 18.2 hours per year. Attendance at

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IEP meetings averaged 22.9 hours per year. Weekly activities were reported as:

Min/Week	
60	-interacting with counselors or teachers regarding special education issues
53	-interacting with special education teachers
43	-interacting with special education students
26	-interacting with the parents of special education students
40	-interacting with special education support staff

The administrator, as the key factor in mainstreaming success, must develop an overt, positive attitude before interacting with the various members of the program team.

The administrator should be aware of the way members of each contact group views their own participation with special education and their attitudes toward the special education program. The attitude of the special education staff should be one of helping regular teachers and special education students in succeeding in a mainstreamed program as well as in the individualized educational resource program. The special education teachers should work through the administrator and should have his support in providing services needed. Without the support of the administrator, success in a mainstreamed program will be minimal. In the past, many special education teachers

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transferred to special education from regular teaching areas. Because they lack training and experience, the administrator should provide in-service opportunities for special education teachers and encourage them to receive advanced education in the area of special education.

Regular classroom teachers should be informed in several areas related to special education in order to understand what it entails and to develop a positive attitude. The regular teacher should be aware of school and community resources as they relate to the service delivery system. He needs to know the characteristics of the handicapped and their needs in the least restrictive environment. Information on how to do educational assessment, specify goals and objectives, and use educational support systems is also important in developing a positive attitude among regular classroom teachers. (Reed, 1993) The two main reasons for negative attitudes toward special education by regular teachers are 1) instructional time is taken away from regular students and 2) special education students lack the necessary basic academic skills for success. (Brozovich & Kotting, 1982) In order for a positive attitude to develop and be maintained, the administrator

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must play a "consultant" role in promoting special education services.

"We cannot drag regular educators kicking and screaming into a merger with special education." (Lieberman, 1985) In the consultive role, the administrator can assist regular teachers in the development and maintenance of a positive attitude as well as aid in the enhancement of the mainstreamed program in their classroom. The first thing the administrator should do is set the "tone" of the building by letting it be known that he supports the special education program. He will lead the instructional staff in making educational plans for handicapped students in the regular classroom. The administrator will also promote interaction between the regular teachers and special education students to enhance the learning activities and to reduce the prejudices associated with handicapped children. (Leibfried, 1984) The administrator should encourage special education teachers to work as resource-support teachers to the regular teachers, but will need to incorporate crisis intervention when personality conflicts among staff arise from commitments to different methods of working. (Hegarty, Pocklington, &

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Lucas, 1982) The administrator must monitor these situations closely to avoid conflicts. He must involve regular teachers in the IEP meetings held prior to the entrance of the special students into the regular classroom. In this way, the regular teacher takes part in devising and implementing the IEP. (Nevin, Semmel, & McCann, 1983)

Several training options are available for regular teachers. The most popular methods used by administrators are the in-service training programs and additional college work in the area of special education. Other methods include:

-special education classroom visitations
-personal conferences between special education teachers and regular teachers with special education supervisor
-teaching demonstrations
-teachers meetings to discuss problems and allow teachers to participate
-special institutes and workshops (Prillaman, 1983)
-professional conferences and conventions at local, regional, or state levels
-up-to-date professional library on special education (French and Henderson, 1984)
-participation of regular teachers in materials planning and in writing concerned with special education
-research in the classroom with a statement of the study and findings made available to other teachers
-administrative assistance
-teamwork with specialists in special education fields (Podemski, et. al., 1984)

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In-service, the most popular type of training, could be provided on a number of special education topics:

-Federal Legislation and State Laws
-Individualized Materials and/or Instruction
-Developing Instructional Goals and Objectives
-Special Education Rules and Regulations
-Mainstreaming Techniques
-Classroom Management Techniques
-Suspension and Exclusion Procedures
-Rights of School Personnel, Parents, and Students Related to Special Education
-Behavior Management Techniques
(Brozovich & Kotting, 1982)

These in-service programs could be provided by special education staff members, other support or auxiliary service personnel, or professors from institutions of higher learning.

Special education students often have poor self-concepts which hamper their integration into the regular classroom. The attitude of the regular teacher and students in the regular classroom will have an affect on his success in the program. In order to assist the special education students in their adaptation to the regular classroom, the administrator needs to understand how the special education students view the special education program. The administrator can play the part of supporter and counselor in assisting special education students to develop positive

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attitudes toward both the regular and special education classroom.

Non-handicapped students are influenced in their attitude toward the handicapped by the attitude of the regular teacher. With the administrator assisting the regular teachers in developing a positive attitude, he is indirectly assisting the non-handicapped students to do the same. The administrator should also encourage regular teachers to educate non-handicapped students about handicaps. (Cochran & Westling, 1977)

The administrator should take the role of leader of activities involving parents in order to keep the lines of communication open. (Leibfried, 1984) Understanding the parents' needs is vital. These needs include:

1. Emotional support
2. Information on special education and the program within the school
3. Active participation in educational planning
4. Maintainance of an identity as parents as well as active members of the community and competent individuals
5. A complete understanding of their role in the educational planning process
6. Knowledge of immediate and future expectations of their child (Marion, 1981)

The administrator should appoint staff members to handle the complex problems which confront the parents of handicapped children.

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Public relations with the community are the responsibility of everyone in the school system, but again, the administrator can coordinate the efforts. He must be aware of the need to inform educational groups, social, political, and professional leaders , and parent groups in order to have community support. Many methods could be utilized such as sending a letter to patrons of the district, making speeches, and obtaining professionals in the various occupations to work with special education students.

Administrators are responsible for a multitude of duties related to special education. Even though he might delegate many of the duties, the administrator should have a working knowledge of each in order to supervise properly. In addition to learning about the duties, the administrator must be knowledgeable about the special education program and the handicapped children involved. He must develop an overt and positive attitude that others in the educational setting can identify. Since transportation and physical facilities involving handicapped children are governed by PL 94-142, the administrator must be aware of these provisions. Personnel recruitment, selection, supervision, and evaluation in special education is not

much different from that of regular teaching staff, but the special education teaching staff should be monitored for their genuine interest in handicapped children and their ability to cooperate with others. The program components of accountibility, service delivery, and evaluation are also governed by PL 94-142, making the administrator responsible for seeing that his school complies with these requirements. The most active role the administrator will take is in his relationships with all others who come in contact with the special education program. Knowing that the administrator maintains a positive attitude toward special education and is supportive of the program will help regular teachers to exhibit a positive attitude. He must have an understanding of how members of each contact group view their contact with special education. He should encourage the special education staff to up-date their own knowledge in the area of special education as well as to provide support to the regular classroom teacher. Regular teachers should be kept informed about the special education program and the handicapped individuals involved in their classes. The administrator will play a consultive role in assisting the regular teachers in the provision of services. He may offer a variety of training options in order to

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better prepare the regular teachers for their work with handicapped students. His position with both special education students and their parents is one of counselor. Even though he may not deal directly with either group, he will provide competent professionals to work with them. In his role as public relations person, he will keep the public informed about special education services, and educate the public to encourage a positive attitude. No matter what duties and responsibilities the administrator decides to administer personnally, his positive attitude and his support of the total special education program is the most vital ingredient for success.

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